



The National Fantasy Fan Federation

TNFF Vol. 71, No. 3
Tightbeam #262
September 2012



2012 N3F Amateur Short Story Contest

Story Contest Rules and Entry Blank

1. This contest is open to all amateur writers in the field, regardless of whether they're members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. For the purposes of this contest, we define an amateur as someone who has sold no more than two (2) stories to professional science fiction or fantasy publications.

2. Stories entered in the contest must be original, unpublished, not longer than 8,500 words in length—and must be related to the science fiction, fantasy, or similar genres in the opinion of the judges.

3. Manuscripts should be typed, single sided on 8 1/2"-by- 11" white paper, double spaced, with pages numbered. The name of the author should not appear anywhere on the manuscript to ensure impartial judging. Photocopies are acceptable, if they are of good quality. Computer printouts must be legible. Email attachments of Word documents are also acceptable.

4. Contestants can enter any number of stories, provided that each is accompanied by a separate entry blank and fee. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) if you would like your story returned at the end of the contest. Do not send your only copy in case of accidental loss; we are not responsible for lost manuscripts. Stories will not be returned without an SASE.

5. The entry fee is \$3 per story for N3F members in good standing, and \$5 for non-members. The extra \$2 is for printing and publicity, which will be paid for using N3F funds. The basic \$3 is for judging expenses and prizes. While N3F members are encouraged to enter the contest, members will not receive any

preference in judging. Because of a long-standing agreement with the British Science Fiction Association, BSFA members can pay the same fee as N3F members.

6. Cash prizes totaling \$100 will be awarded as follows: First prize is \$50, second \$30, and third \$20. Honorable mentions and semi-finalists will receive a certificate of award.

7. Send all manuscripts, accompanied by SASEs, entry forms, and fees to the contest manager: Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373; n3f.story.contest@gmail.com. Make checks payable to William Center. Well-concealed American cash (dollar bills is also acceptable. All entries must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 31, 2012. Email entries will be accepted, but no guarantee of email receipt can be made.

8. The judge is a published science fiction professional. All comments and critiques are solely the judge's opinion, but he promises to be constructively critical and polite.

9. The N3F assumes no publishing rights or obligations. We want to encourage professional sales, not fan publication. All entries will be returned after the contest is over, if accompanied by an SASE. Winners will be notified as soon as the judging is completed. Announcements and notifications of winning entries will be made in March 2013.

Please take your time and submit your best work. You can resubmit stories previously entered. All entries will be kept confidential and will be judged fairly and anonymously. The deadline for all entries is Dec. 31, 2012. Good luck

(Detach or photocopy. Must accompany all entries.) Mail to: **Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373**

Title of story (for identification): _____

Author's name and address: _____

Author's email address: _____ Author's age: _____

Enclosed is the entry fee of \$5 (for N3F or BSFA members, the fee is \$3). I have read the above rules for the 2012 N3F

Amateur Short Story Contest, and I agree to them.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to my third issue of TNFF/Tightbeam as editor. Over the past decade, the Bylaws have stipulated that our September issue is to be the election issue, where candidates submit platforms to hold office next year.

Also included is the mandatory membership roster - listing the names and addresses of members, both are printed here - though the roster is only for our paying members - the public version of this zine has the roster replaced with ads for N3F and member's SF/F-related business. (Contact me if you want in on this - ads are free to members on a first-come first served basis.)

Of course, we also have our various reports from bureaus and the directorate in the TNFF.

This issue also includes an expanded Tightbeam section - with member created and curated fiction, news and art—including a whopping 12 pages of fiction in this issue alone, seems destined to return to its former life as a separate fanzine of its own, if it keeps growing. If that's what you want, be sure to write in and let us know.

Keep getting your geek on,
David Speakman



ART CREDITS

Jose Sanchez:
1, 15, 3

David Speakman :
3, 4, 5, 29, 33



Cover Art: "In the
Silence of the Night"
By Jose Sanchez

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Neffy Awards

David Speakman

Round Robins

Patricia King

Short Story Contest

Jefferson Swycaffer

Welcommittee

Cynthia Richter

Open (Contact President)

Blind Services, Computer Gaming, Future Fandom, Teaching Science Fiction, The Writer's Exchange.



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THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN

The Official Organ of the National Fantasy Fan Federation

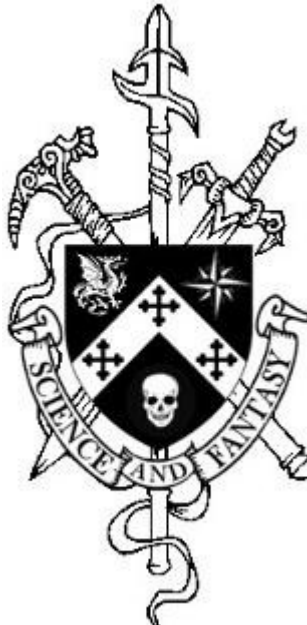
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Editorial Cabal

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David Speakman

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Ruth Davidson (2003-2008)
Heath Row (2009-2011)

ART EDITOR

Sarah E. Harder

REVIEWS EDITOR

Heath Row

FICTION EDITOR

Jeff Redmond

PUBLISHER

Craig Boyd

DISTRIBUTOR

David Speakman

SUBMISSIONS

All submissions are to be
sent to the editorial cabal via
email at:

cabal@n3fmail.com

unless otherwise noted.

NEXT ISSUE:

**December 2012: More Fic-
tion, Election results, Con
Reports!, and the 2013 N3F
Calendar.
(The Mayans were wrong!)**

Letters of comment

2012.06.27

Dear David,

Thank you for TNFF Vol. 71, No. 2/ Tightbeam 261. Always good to see, and always good to see a different part of fandom. As I admire the artwork on the front, looks like a spaceship version of a flying boat or hovercraft, I will continue on to the insides.

My letter...not everyone agrees with me that for the most part, fandom plays fairly well together. I will take that up a notch, and say that we should agree to disagree, and your mileage may vary. Those who do work well with others are usually happier with fandom because of the level of cooperation.

Ah, I wish I was going to Chicon 7, but no money for it right now. We'll skip this year's, and next year's Worldcon, and with luck and some income, we can go to London for the 2014 Worldcon, name to be announced at Chicon, I believe.

Tightbeam, Review Section...I am happy to say I do get all those zines listed, and lots more. Always go to www.efanzines.com for lots more zines from many aspects of fandom.

Just recently, Yvonne and I were vendors at a steampunk street faire in downtown Toronto, called Steam on Queen. Just one day, but a lot of fun, and some excellent sales. Google it up, and have a look at the fineries worn by steampunks from all around southern and central Ontario. Over 4200 people walked in the ground of historic Campbell House (now stomped flat, I am sure), and just today, Steam on Queen 2 was announced as a go, so we are looking forward to it.

I have to wind up now, and get this to you...the hour is late, and I am tired. Many thanks for this issue, and I will look for more soon.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON

[[I agree, efanazines.com is a an essential stop for anyone interested in zines. As for the diversity of fandom—that's the spice that makes us interesting.

I, too, am enjoying the current steampunk fad—though I was a fan back when it was still called Victorian SF.—ed.]]

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2012.06.29

Dear David,

I'm one of your newer members. I publish a science fiction magazine called, *Nova Science Fiction*. Recently, Jeff Redmond, who lives in Grand Rapids, MI, became the first member of N3F to sell a story to Nova SF; it's called, *Androidess* and it's a robot story in the best tradition of the robot story. I think Isaac Asimov would have liked it.

I'll let you know later which issue Jeff's story will be published in. Right now, it looks like the story will be in issue 30, scheduled for November 2012.

Please support Jeff's efforts to become an established science fiction writer. Please support my efforts to make Nova SF a success. Incidentally, the new Issue 29 will be available in early July. Copies are available for \$6.50 each (CA residents needs to add \$0.45 sales tax). Make out all checks to: Wesley Kawato, not Nova SF. Mail all orders to:

Nova SF
% Wesley Kawato
17983 Paseo Del Sol
Chino Hills, CA 91709-3947

Yours Truly,
Wesley Kawato

[[I agree about that Jeff Redmond, I have a copy of Androidess here. Great stuff. And kudos to you, too, with the magazine and your support of short sto-

ries. And as always, our zines offer free advertising to our members on a first-come-first-served basis as space permits (with preference given to fannish and SF/F subjects). Feel free to contact me if you are interested. Oh, and Jeff as fiction editor? It's a done deal - check out our masthead. -- ed.]]

2012.07.20

Hello, again. Just want to let you know that after completing work on Nova SF #29, I began preparing the story line-up for Nova SF #30, scheduled for November of 2012. That's when I realized I was way short on story submissions. Right now, I'm looking at the prospect of having to postpone publication of this issue. So, I'm putting out a call for story submissions.

Nova SF Magazine accepts stories of up to 7,000 words. We publish space travel, time travel and alternate history science fiction. We pay ½ cent a word upon publication.

Sample copies of all 29 issues are available for \$5.00 each, plush \$1.50 postage each. California residents add 9% sales tax (45 cents). Mail all orders and submission to:

Nova SF
% Wesley Kawato
17983 Paseo Del Sol
Chino Hills, CA 91709-3947

Again, make out all checks to Wesley Kawato, not Nova SF.

Bureau Reports

Neffy Award Bureau David Speakman

The 2012 Neffy Winners are as follows:

Movie: Fantasy

- Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2

Movie: Science Fiction

- Contagion

Movie: Super Hero/Comics

- Captain America

TV: Science Fiction

- Doctor Who

TV: Horror

- The Walking Dead

TV: Fantasy

- A Game of Thrones

Author, Book: Horror

- Dean Koontz, *What the Night Knows*

Author, Book: Science Fiction

- China Miéville, *Embassy Town*

Author, Book: Horror

- Jim Butcher, *Ghost Story*

Author, YA SF-F

- Ransom Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*

Best Fanzine

- Mike Glycer, *File 770*

Ballots for the 2013 Neffys will be in the first clubzine of 2013. If you want to join the Neffy bureau, please contact me.

N'APA Bureau Report Heath Row

N'APA—What It Is, and Why You Should Join.

First of all, some of you may not know what an APA is. It's an Amateur Press Publication, rather like a very, very slow wiki or blog. The title originated back in the snail-mail days, when people didn't mind circulating original artwork, writing, and opinions through the US Postal Service. Some of these APAs are still in existence, I might add.

N'APA has been around for a long time, though not continuously, unfortunately. However, it continues to be a place to see original artwork, photos, original writing, and so on. Due to the amateur nature and

(Continued on page 9)

relatively small circulation involved, copy-right remains with the author and is not considered self-publication in case you still want to sell the piece to a professional market.

Here are few things occasionally found in N'APA—continuing chapters of DEAD MAN'S HAND (to be published for Kindle this summer). Articles about neglected authors. Short stories and novel excerpts. Astoundingly beautiful photographs. Insightful mailing comments. It's like publishing your own magazine, except without the labor actions, postal strikes, and angry editors.

Contributions are requested from members every odd month of the year, by the 15th (although the Central Mailer is usually reasonable, especially if I'm behind myself).

Questions you may have, especially if you have already been in an Amateur Press Publication before:

"What about printing costs? Do you know what color printing costs these days?"

This is why we're an electronic publication. Your contribution only needs to be attached to an email sent to the Central Mailer (me).

"Um...I guess that answers my question about

postage. Are there any dues?"

No. All members of N3F may join, though when it gets too large, it may split off. I've been in several APAs, and the ones that get over 20 members tend to give the Central Mailer a nervous breakdown, plus it takes *forever to do all the mailing comments*.

"I've been in APAs before and I'm the only one who does MC's. What ah, is it like for N'APA?"

Every single member of N'APA is really good about doing mailing comments for each issue. Ok, sometimes one of us will beg off, but they will actually do the double MC's the next issues. I know, I fainted, too.

"File formats?"

PDF is preferred, because then you have everything the way you like it. I also accept Word, RTF, and other Windows formats. I no spikka da Mac, so if y'all could send stuff to me as a .pdf, I'll be your best friend. I then make sure everything is converted into .pdf (got Acrobat X for my birthday, wheel!), combine the files along with a colophon (and the title page usually has a spiffy, usually humorous picture acquired from here and there), tot up the page totals on my handy dandy spreadsheet, and mail the latest

(Continued on page 10)

Bureau Reports, Continued...

BUREAU REPORTS *(Continued from page 9)*

N'APA to all the members.

"Why all this now?"

Because we are stalwart, yet we are few, and Winter Is Coming (sorry, Game of Thrones fan). It's more fun with more members anyway.

Join the party before we run out of chips and dip! Hope you see you. If you have been a member before, we will be delighted to welcome you back. If you have no clue what you're doing but think this might be fun—well, it is! Drop me a line at tlamb...@charter.net —I'm Jean Lamb and I'll be your Central Mailer. Our next deadline is July 15th.

See you there!

Gaming Bureau George Phillies

George Phillies and Tom Vasel have just published the Second Edition of their book on game design "Designing Modern Strategy Games", which is about designing Euro-games. You can see it at [http://www.smashwords.com/books/search?](http://www.smashwords.com/books/search?query=George+Phillies)

[query=George+Phillies](http://www.smashwords.com/books/search?query=George+Phillies)

or at

<http://www.amazon.com/Designing-Modern-Strategy-Studies-ebook/dp/B008XRNQMQ>

Phillies and Vasel also wrote (<http://3mpub.com/phillies>) "Contemporary Perspectives in Game Design" and "Design Elements of Contemporary Strategy Games" which is the first edition of "Designing Modern Strategy Games".

Phillies is now writing a new book on the classic Avalon Hill game Stalingrad. The Prospectus for the Project reads:

Noting the sad fading away of players of war games, I am starting to write two short (by my standards) books, namely "Stalingrad for Beginners" and "Stalingrad for the Intermediate Player". I hope to finish them within a year. The objectives are to introduce new players to the game and bring up tactical skills. While Stalingrad is no longer in print, used copies continue to appear on eBay, and ZunTzu, Vassal, Aide de Camp, and other software packages support play by mail.

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I will be using ZunTzu to generate the figures, and will be publishing via Kindle, Smashwords, or perhaps Createspace. As part of the book, I am looking for records of complete games that could be critiqued. ZunTzu records are somewhat easier to handle, but I will take what I can get. I will be happy to protect the anonymity of players, since some of you might prefer that your opponents not know that you were the one being critiqued.

The wise man or woman will ask: Can this Phillies fellow actually write a book, let

alone two of them? When complete, Stalingrad for Beginners will be my 14th book, unless I finish something else first, in which case it will be my 15th or perhaps 16th book. My most recent three books, completed this summer, are:

- Designing Modern Strategy Games (with Tom Vasel, Kindle, Smashwords.com; textbook on designing Eurogames)
- The One World (smashwords.com, Kindle; novel, three musketeers vs amazons)
*Mistress of the Waves(Kindle, Kindle premium; novel, her wits against starfarer ultratech)

Upcoming Genre Movie Releases

OCTOBER 2012

- 05** Frankenweenie – Animated Fantasy (Wide)
- 19** Paranormal Activity 4 – Paranormal Horror (Wide)
- 26** Silent Hill: Revelation – Fantasy Horror (Wide)
- 26** Cloud Atlas - SF (Wide)

NOVEMBER 2012

- 02** Wreck-It Ralph – Animated Fantasy (Wide)
- 02** The Man With the Iron Fists—Wire Fu Fantasy (Wide)
- 09** Skyfall – James Bond (Wide)
- 16** Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part 2 – Fantasy (Wide)
- 21** Life of Pi—Fantasy Adventure (Wide)

21 Red Dawn (2012) - Dystopia (wide)

21 Rise of the Guardians—Animated (Wide)

30 The Collection—Horror (Wide)

DECEMBER 2012

- 14** The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey—Fantasy (Wide)
- 21** Monsters, Inc 3D—Animated re-release (Wide)

JANUARY 2013

- 11** Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters—Fantasy Action Comedy (Wide)
- 18** Mama—Horror 9Wide)
- 25** The Conjuring - Horror (Wide)

FEBRUARY 2013

- 1** Bullet to the Head—comic adpt. (Wide)
- 1** Warm Bodies—zombie romance (Wide)
- 13** Escape from Planet Earth—animated (Wide)
- 22** I, Frankenstein—action horror (Wide)

MARCH 2013

- 1** Elysium—science fiction (Wide)
- 8** Oz: The Great and Powerful—Fantasy (Wide)
- 15** Carrie (2013) Horror (Wide)
- 22** The Croods—animated (Wide)
- 22** Jack the Giant Killer—fantasy adventure (Wide)
- 29** The Host—Horror (Wide)

Yours Truly,
Wesley Kawato

[[Half a penny a word is more than we pay. :) Consider the word to writers gotten out. - ed.]]

2012.07.29

I gouged my left leg getting into our car and it's been slow to heal. But I've gone from going into Rehab at the Cameron hospital three days a week to one. Two spots on my leg and one seems almost healed. But it looks like I'll be going in for another month. We sold a load of timber out of our woods and that will help pay my medical expenses.

Now have 10 short stories published at planetarystories.com, including "Little Lost Cat" in the next issue. My favorite is "Magic and Football Don't Mix," a story of the Arkham University football team.

I had my 71st birthday in April. Which puts me up there with the N3F.

Nice to hear from Lloyd Penney and Angels Myers. And Bruce R. Gillespie. Gotten so all my fiction is coming out on the Internet. As are all my letters.

Why not Bouncing Round Robins? It

has been many years since I was in a Round Robin? All it takes is for one member not to mail it on, and the Robin is dead. Sort of like taking a link out of a chain. But a Bouncing Round Robin is more like a mesh of links. Not having one does not matter.

Bouncing Round Robins circulate by email. Each member has a list of the other members in the Robin. Every week, each member mails out his or her contribution to everybody else in the Robin. If she or he misses a week, they still receive the Robin and can contribute to the next one.

If everybody misses a week, the RM can set the dates two weeks apart and look for new members.

Or it could be possible to use something like the Yahoo groups, and post contributions to each Robin at an online site.

I see no reason to vote in the Neffys. Looked over the bunch. Have seen "The Adventures of Tintin" and read Planetary Stories.

I voted on the Hugo ballots, but quit when I hadn't read most of the stories.

Weather here has been too dry up until recently. Too late to help the corn, but The soybeans can still make it. As a farm boy, driving by corn fields is de-

pressing. Lower corn yields will mean higher food prices in the long run. Farmers will have to cut back on meat animals.

Which might lower meat prices... temporarily. Cutting back on dairy herds means less milk and higher prices. So drought hurts everybody.

Rick Brooks

[[Your ideas about a bouncing RR are interesting—particularly for those of us who have fully adopted the Internet age

or who without the ability to commit to a pen-and-paper RR.

The wonderful thing about awards is it allows fans to tell fellow fans with less time on their hands, which are the best to check out. And the beauty: you can ignore categories if you want.

I do hope your medical conditions improve—the weather in northeast Indiana during the winter can be tough on mobility .. One of the few things I do not miss about the lakes area of Indiana. —ed.]]

Directorate Report

PASSED: July 4, 2012

(Three votes needed to pass)

Motion 2012-03

Motion: Speakman:

Suspend the Rules for the rest of 2012 to allow the Editor of the Official Organ, instead of the Secretary, to distribute printed copies of the Official Organ to current membership.

The Editor may be reimbursed for postage expenses for this distribution from the Treasurer under the same terms as provided to the Secretary.

YEA: Speakman, Row, Wilson, Harder

No Vote: Swartz

Other motions Under Consideration, no vote yet taken:

- 2012-04: Motion: Speakman—Separation of Powers: President may not also be Secretary except for on interim or emergency basis.
- 2012-05: Motion: Speakman—Discuss member Ruth Davidson's idea to create two forms of memberships: non-dues and dues, with all clubac open to non-dues members except holding office, voting for officers and paper zine subscriptions.
- 2012-06: Motion: Speakman—Proposed Constitutional Amendment to modernize membership rules to eliminate two-person maximum for memberships at the same home.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The N3F Membership roster is published twice yearly. This list is private and only made available to members. Public versions of this zine delete or replace the roster list with advertising.

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N3F 2013 ELECTION

Deadline for voting is November 15, 2012—all votes must be cast via email or U.S. mail to our election teller, Heath Row. Please send your votes to one of the following addresses:
Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave. Culver City, CA 90230, or via email at: kalel@well.com

DIRECTORATE

(Vote for 5, write-in allowed)

Holly Wilson

Having served one year on the Directorate, I feel like I'm just starting to figure things out. Participation on this level has provided a new perspective on the group and I welcome the chance to continue working with the Directorate to make the club stronger and work to encourage participation of the membership. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the club on this level. Your vote would be appreciated.

Ruth Davidson

Once upon a time I was President of the N3F for three consecutive years with some modicum of success. Now, I'd like to be a member of the Directorate to help move the club forward. My goal is to help set things up in a way so that my future grandchildren can enjoy the club long after I am gone. Thank you for your consideration.

Jon D. Swartz

I have enjoyed my time as president and as a member of the Directorate. I want to be a

part of the several projects that were begun, but not completed, during my years as president. For this reason I am again running for the Directorate. I'd appreciate your vote.

PRESIDENT

(Vote for 1, write-ins allowed)

David Speakman

In 2013, I will be coming up on my 30th anniversary as a Neffer. I first joined N3F as a teenager in Churubusco, Indiana, back when the Internet was more science fiction than reality. In my years here, I have participated in almost every level of the club, most recently as the Editor of the clubzines and as a member of the Directorate for the past few years. If elected as president, my goals for the year are as follows: 1) strengthen and expand our print publications, 2) attract more members by making joining the club easier, 3) continue the focus on our traditional strength of reaching out to rural state fans without local clubs, enable us to join forces together to accomplish feats unattainable individually. Your vote and your continued guidance are appreciated.



National Fantasy Fan Federation Application

(Former Members get 1 year Free![exp 12/31/2012])

____ New Member ____ FORMER MEMBER ____ Joint Membership ____ Gift Membership

Name (Please Print): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Postal Code, Country: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Male: ____ Female: ____ Birth date: _____

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Interests. Please select any and all of the following that you're interested in or would like to get involved in

____ APAs (amateur press associations)

____ Art

____ Audio

____ Blogging

____ Books

____ Cartooning, cartoons, and animation

____ Collecting

____ Comic books

____ Computers and technology

____ Conventions and clubs

____ Correspondence

____ Costuming

____ DVDs and videos

____ Editing

____ Fanzines

____ Filk singing

____ Games and video games

____ Movies

____ Online activities

____ Publishing

____ Reading and book clubs

____ Reviewing

____ Role-playing games

____ Round robins (group letters)

____ Taping

____ Teaching science fiction

____ Television

____ Writing

Which would you prefer?

____ A PDF of The Fan emailed to you ____ The clubzine printed and mailed to you ____ Both

How long have you been interested in science fiction and fantasy? _____

How long have you been involved in fandom? _____

List any other clubs you are or have been a member _____

List any conventions you've attended: _____

What prozines and fanzines do you read, if any? _____

What is your favorite type of sf/f? _____

Who are your favorite sf/f authors: _____

Are you interested in online activities? If yes, what type? _____

Which, if any, of the following would you be willing to help the club with?

____ Artwork ____ Recruiting at conventions ____ Writing for club publications

____ Organizing activities ____ Corresponding ____ Publishing

____ Other: _____

Name of Sponsoring Member (if any): _____

Regular dues are \$18 per year (\$22 for Joint Memberships) which includes subscriptions to the club's fanzine as well as other activities and benefits. Make checks or money orders payable to William Center (the treasurer). All payments must be made in U.S. funds. Mail dues and application to club secretary Dennis Davis, 25549 Byron St., San Bernardino, CA 92404-6403. Please allow at least eight weeks for your first clubzine to arrive. You can also sign up online at <http://n3f.org>

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SEPTEMBER 2012



WE NEED YOU!

The N3F publications relies upon contributions from its members and readers. This means that your submissions make the TNFF and Tightbeam possible.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: November 15, 2012

Art

Comics

Original short fiction

Fan fiction

Con reports

Essays

Non-fiction

Letters/

Complaints



By Rin Pitcher

THE WRITING SPIDER

*If you wish to thrive,
Let a spider run alive
-- English Proverb*

David Goldman brought the rolled-up newspaper down on his victim with a satisfying *smack*.

"There! That'll teach ya, you ugly little bastard," he said. He lifted the paper from the bathroom floor and examined its underside. "Yuck," David said to himself under his breath as he looked at the gooey mess stuck to the newspaper.

He carefully took the newspaper to the wastebasket and tried to shake the hapless spider off of it. No good; it was stuck fast. David took a cotton ball from the medicine chest and gingerly wiped the spider off of the paper, being careful not to actually touch the mess.

When that unpleasant little task was over, David resumed shaving. He had caught a glimpse of the spider in the mirror, crawling up the wall behind him. Instantly, David, whose imagination had always been a tad hyperactive, had the mental image of the spider sneaking into position for a surprise attack. Snarling and slavering, the creature would leap from the wall onto David's neck where it would immediately bite into his jugular vein and either suck him dry or inject some bizarre spider-poison into his body, killing him instantly before he would even realize what was happening.

Fortunately David had been able to grab the morning paper from the living room and get back to the bathroom before the disgusting thing could get away. The first swat had merely knocked the spider to the floor where David easily finished off the madly scuttling creature.

Nasty things, spiders. Ugly, cruel, parasitic

little sons of bitches. David shivered a little as, while trying to dislodge the spider from his newspaper, he thought of how some spiders paralyzed their prey with poison then enshrouded them in silk to keep for a later meal -- leaving the poor victims to contemplate their bleak futures.

Whenever he thought of that particular death, David couldn't help but remember a scene from the original version of "The Fly," where the tiny half-human fly, trapped in a spider's web and on the verge of being bitten and devoured by the web's gargantuan tenant, screams pitifully for help while trying to fend off the spider with his one puny arm.

David pushed the picture from his mind with a snort and finished his shaving. The bug was dead and that's all that mattered.

After breakfast, David headed outside and dragged his old Lawnboy out of the garage, psyching himself up to cut the grass. The mower's tank was out of gas, so he trudged back into the garage to get the gas can. It was empty too, of course. Since this was one of the older machines which ran on a mixture of gas and oil, David started digging around in the storage shelves for something to measure the fluids.

The old coffee can he was looking for peeped out at him from behind a wad of rags on the bottom shelf. He saw a spider's nest built snugly within a fold in one of the rags just as he closed his thin hand on the small pile of greasy cloth.

He was already pulling the bundle toward himself before his brain actually registered the possibility that he was holding what was probably a nestful of spiders in his bare hand. With a

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sharp yelp of panic, David quickly hurled the rags to the floor. He then picked up a flathead screwdriver from the workbench and began poking through the pile; separating the cloths in an attempt to find the one with the nest.

He found it after a couple of minutes. It reminded him of one of those things he had once seen in a nature documentary. The mother spider spun a little cocoon-like nest around some unfortunate grasshopper or butterfly which she had previously stung and then laid her eggs inside of it so that when the eggs hatched there would be a ready food supply for the babies. The victim wasn't dead, only paralyzed. It had to be alive when the young spiders emerged otherwise it would rot before the eggs hatched and therefore be of no use.

Again, David had a sickening chill feeling as he thought of what it must be like to be the grasshopper whose ill luck it was to provide the nourishment for the hundreds of hatchlings. He imagined the instinctual fear and panic felt by the grasshopper as he too spotted his enemy, saw the long finely haired legs come down before him just as he felt the weight of her body on his back and the sting of her bite on his soft abdomen.

David imagined the dull, stupid numbing feeling that would pass over him as the poison took effect; the wild panic upon realizing that he will carry her young brood inside of his body until they hatched weeks later. Agonizing to the brink of madness in the dark, suffocating confines of silk and oil-soaked cotton; imagining what it will be like to be devoured alive from the inside out by thousands of pitiless tiny mouths that cared for nothing except filling thousands of tiny little bellies -- only to find out when the time came that imagination quickly paled in comparison to reality.

David roused himself with a blink and angrily began stomping on the rag. Afterward, he knelt down and gently spread the square of pale red cloth out flat so that he might examine the nest. he had to make sure that the little white bundle and its grisly contents were completely destroyed before he could do anything else.

The rag's threads were pretty much intact with only a few holes in its fabric. In one place, however, there was one hole through which a long brownish leg poked.

David stood up and carefully placed his foot so that the heel of his foot was directly over the nest, then put his foot down, letting his whole weight rest on it. He felt more than heard the exoskeleton of the grasshopper crunch gratefully. David then grabbed a small garden trowel, scooped up the rag, and holding it at arm's length, walked over to the trash can and dropped it inside.

He put the trowel away, wiped his hands on his jeans and began to examine the corners and window frames of the garage. there were a few cobwebs composed mostly of dust, but that was all he found. David decided, however, that where there was smoke there was more than likely fire to be found. It would probably be a good idea to get out here someday and spray the place before the damned things took over. Maybe he'd do that tomorrow.

After finding the ingredients, David mixed a gallon of lawnmower fuel, filled the tank and spent the next couple of hours leisurely cutting the grass. After getting the yard, he plugged in the weed whacker and trimmed around the house, trees, shrubs, walk, porch and flowerbeds. It was as he was trimming the weeds around the outer edge of the small vegetable garden in his backyard that David made a discovery so terrible that if it hadn't been for the exclusive safety feature on his weed whacker, he

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would have been legless below the knees from that day forward.

Delicately hanging by pale grey-white threads among his beefsteak tomato plants was one of the largest spider webs David had ever seen. It was strung between the two plants so that it spanned the foot-and-a-half space he had left between the rows. It sat very near the ground. The web was decorated with a couple of small white bundles containing uneaten meals and a few ratty, shriveled wads of silk that had once contained flies and cabbage moths. There were even a few stray body parts: wings, legs, a dry hollow shell which had once been a cricket.

Sitting in the midst of this of this somewhat untidy net was a large garden-variety garden spider. It clung to the sticky threads by all of its shiny black legs except the foremost pair, the very ends of which it crossed and re-crossed in front of its head -- momentarily giving the impression that it was twiddling its thumbs with well-fed boredom.

David could do nothing for several seconds except gape in amazement and disgust at the fat black and yellow monster that had decided to set up housekeeping in his garden. It had to be at least as big as the palm of his hand. He couldn't remember having seen it in the garden the last time he was in it. That had only been the day before yesterday and surely he couldn't have missed something like that; not a garden spider *that size for God's sake!*

He hated them more than any other spider, even more than tarantulas. Most people thought tarantulas were the most frightening of spiders. But for David, garden spiders were the epitome of horror and revulsion. Tarantulas were too big and clumsy-looking to be really menacing. They looked like Halloween cookies to David -- plump, oversized bodies with thick stocky legs,

nicely browned, with currants for eyes. Garden spiders, on the other hand, were stuff of nightmares with their mottled black stomachs and sharp spindly legs that looked like they were made of obsidian. Tarantulas were furry and warm; garden spiders were sleek and cold.

As David stood considering what to do with this repulsive interloper, his memory brought up a scene with the startling clarity of a small five-year-old boy with a bowlful of vegetable peelings and apple chunks.

He was standing about five feet away from the cage where his pet rabbit, Pete, lived. The food was for Pete, but the boy would get no closer to the cage because a fat garden spider had built its web along the front of the wire hutch just above the door.

The spider couldn't have picked a better spot since the flies which were attracted by the rabbit droppings beneath the cage were more than the spider could ever had hoped to eat in its lifetime. The rabbit paid it no attention whatsoever, spending most his days that hot, sticky summer flopped over onto his side sleeping. But little David, remembering a movie he had seen just last week about a huge black spider which had devoured a whole city, simply could not bring himself to get any closer to the cage.

He had tried to get his older brother, Brian, who was eight, to chase the spider away, but Brian had only laughed at him for being afraid of something as harmless as a garden spider. Brian had called him a crybaby, a sissy, a little pansy-assed mama's boy.

Brian had dared him to open the cage door. He had double-dog dared him. David, on the verge of tears, was torn. He was manically afraid of the spider, but at the same time no one could refuse a double-dog dare. He really would be a pansy-ass then, and Brian would make sure every kid in the neighborhood knew it before

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sundown. If David refused the dare his position in the local social scale would be lower than if he'd had head lice.

After spending several excruciating minutes gathering up his courage, David actually managed to put his hand on the latch and was just about to open the door when Pete, eager for his supper, sprung towards the door. The hutch lurched sharply on its pickety stilts, flinging the spider from its web and onto the upper arm of the startled boy.

David dropped his bowl of scraps and screamed bloody murder. He stood frozen with terror, eyes bugging to the size of boiled eggs. The spider clung to the cotton shirt sleeve for dear life; David could feel its scratchy legs holding onto his skin through the fabric.

The little boy's face had turned beet-red with screaming, but his paralysis had soon been overpowered by his crazy desire to get away from this fearful thing as soon as possible. He was madly flinging his arm in an attempt to dislodge the spider when his brother, laughing hysterically, grabbed hold of the flailing limb and neatly flicked the garden spider from David's sleeve to the ground before them.

David had immediately raised his foot and was just about to stomp the guts out of the hateful monster when Brian pushed him over, hard.

"Don't kill it!" he had yelled angrily, almost fearfully, "Don'tcha know what happens when ya kill a writin' spider, ya little idgit?"

David had looked at Brian as if he were crazy. Brian had never shown squeamishness before when it came to killing bugs. In fact, Brian had always seemed to enjoy it. All of his schoolbooks boasted at least one fly-cemetery among their pages.

"Whaddya talkin' about?" David asked snidely. "It's just a dumb spider, just a dumb ol' garden spider. Why'dya call it a writin' spider?"

They can't write any better'n you can, idgit!" David had liked seeing his brother nervous for a change.

Brian quickly regained his composure. *"Writin' spiders can write, stupid. Everyone knows that, an' when ya kill a writin' spider, it writes your name in the air or on a rock or on a stick or on whatever ya kill it with. Then any other writin' spider that comes along'll read your name an' know it was you that killed his brother, an' come after ya to get even."*

David was intrigued in spite of the chilly feeling he got after seeing the dead seriousness on Brian's face.

"What if ya stomped on it real fast before it had time to write anything?" David asked with morbid curiosity.

"Don't matter. It'll write your name in the air. Then the next writin' spider that comes along'll read it and getcha for killin' his brother," Brian had repeated sagaciously.

This wasn't entirely a new concept for David. He was always watching movies on TV where monsters got even with people for something people had done to them. People always were disturbing their sleep, or destroying monster-nurseries or stealing monster babies to put on exhibit.

David never had thought for an instant, however, that such things happened in real life.

"What do they do to ya?" David asked in spite of himself. In the movies, the injured monsters always went on rampages; killing everything in sight until some smart scientist came up with a way of stopping them for good.

Brian stooped so he could look his brother face to face. David still was lying on the ground.

"Nobody I know has ever killed one around here, so I don't know for sure," Brian confessed. "But some of the guys have heard stories about what happens to people that kill writin' spiders. They say that the spiders all get together and

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gang up on the killer sometime when they're alone so nobody can see 'em.

"They crawl all over 'im an' chew 'im up and suck all his blood out. Or they bite 'im and inject poison into 'im and he dies from that. His face turns all black and he swells up until he busts and his guts go gushin' all over the place and smells like a sewer."

David looked at the retreating spider with round eyes and a kind of fearful respect. He counted himself lucky to have a big brother like Brian to keep a dumb little kid like him from getting into trouble. From that day forward all through the rest of his childhood, David had been very careful not to harm any spider -- especially writing spiders -- lest he incur the wrath of the spider clans.

David was an adult now, and of course he had outgrown his old childhood superstitions about spiders. He now killed first and asked questions later where spiders were concerned, whether or not they were keeping a shit list. They were nothing but a menace. Spiders may have frightened him as a kid, but they did no such thing now, especially this fat-assed thing dangling in front of him in his own tomato patch.

David ran to the bed of marigolds in front of his house. There he selected a large, thin flat rock from the bordering and carried it to the garden. He stepped into the row between the plants so that he stood directly in front of the indolent spider's web. David looked at it a moment, feeling a quick pang of fear as he remembered again Brian's lurid tales of certain death that befell any who killed a writing spider. He quickly put the childish fear down and chastised himself for being so superstitious after all these years. Then, with a shrug, he lifted the stone above his head and, aiming carefully, heaved it as hard as he

could into the spider.

The rock tore through the webbing, ripping it into two uneven halves that fluttered briefly before clinging to the leaves of the tomato plants. The spider was nowhere to be seen.

David squatted next to the rock. He searched the surrounding ground quickly to make sure the spider hadn't gotten away from him at the last moment and was now scurrying into the safety of the garden's undergrowth. He saw nothing. David gently lifted up the edge of the rock and peered beneath it. The air around his head roared and went black as he saw within the smashed wreckage of the spider's body, a thin, shiny, black-glass leg poking upwards and moving slowly as though it were a director's baton keeping time in the air for an unseen orchestra.

David regained his senses about a half hour later, flat on his back. His first sight upon opening his eyes was the deep blue of the twilight sky broken by a few pink-tinged clouds passing slowly overhead.

He sat up quickly and looked around nervously. No one was to be seen. He was greatly relieved about that; he'd hate to try and explain to anyone how he had passed out in his own garden because he had seen a mashed garden spider writing his name on an invisible wanted poster for some future arachnid equalizer.

He picked himself up and glanced at the piece of limestone he had used to kill the spider. He told himself that he should move the stone back to the flower bed before he went into the house, but he couldn't make himself even touch the thing, let alone lift it.

There was still light enough left for him to see the remains of the spider if he should look, which he was sure to do. He told himself, too, that he was being stupid, that the spider was dead for God's sake and that it wasn't going to get or hurt or kill him. It was dead, he had killed

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it, and that was that. Put the damn rock back in the flowerbed.

He couldn't do it. He stared at the dark grey lump as if it had just spoken to him, his mind happily replaying for him the sight of the spider's leg gracefully tracing a pattern in the air.

David smacked his leg with self-disgust and turned toward the house.

Later that night, David was sitting up in bed writing a letter to his brother, Brian. He told Brian about the incident with the garden spider, making all kinds of jokes about it. Making too many jokes, said the back of his mind. David didn't really think it was funny at all, but he wasn't about to admit that to Brian; not to the man who was primarily responsible for David's being a borderline arachnophobe in the first place.

He was very tempted to tear up this letter and write another thanking Brian for yet one more piece of useless baggage to an already overloaded life, but he didn't. He went on with this letter, unconsciously hoping that if he treated the whole affair as a joke, he eventually would come to believe it was just that, a joke. Try as he might, though, David just couldn't pull it off.

An unwholesome little voice at the back of his head kept telling him, over and over, that he had really done it now; he was in it deep, oh boy, was he in it deep this time. David had killed a writin' spider, and you just don't do that in this part of the country. You're gonna pay for this one, Mr. Goldman, yessiree-bob, and you're gonna pay with interest!

"What the hell is wrong with me?" David asked himself. "It was just a damn spider. It's not like I'd just cut up one of the neighborhood kids with a chainsaw for heaven's sake. It was a spider; an ugly, creepy, disgusting, ignorant, illiterate spider. I've killed dozens of spiders.

This one was just a little bigger than the others. That's the only difference. It just made a bigger greasy spot when I punched its ticket, and that's all!"

David tossed the unfinished letter and the pen he was using onto the nightstand and turned off the light. He needed some sleep, that's what it was, just some sleep. He fluffed the pillows, then settled himself into his favorite sleeping position with the blankets pulled up around his chin. A fat, full, honey-colored harvest moon shined through the window, throwing a pale warm light over everything in the bedroom.

It was too bright for David, however. besides, it was playing tricks on his already keyed-up imagination. The shadows in the room were moving around a little too much for his liking. It reminded him of when he was a kid, wide-eyed and nearly scared out of his gourd after seeing an especially gruesome monster movie, hunkered beneath the covers hoping that whatever horrible beast it was that he was sure was hiding in the closet wouldn't be able to find him.

He snapped wide awake with a violent start. He had heard something. No, he couldn't have; he was the only one in the house and there was no wind to speak of outside. David listened carefully, but could hear nothing unusual. he probably had been in one of those half-dozes and only thought he heard something. It happened to him all the time.

David laid back and had just gotten himself comfortable when he heard the sound again; it was a faint rattling kind of noise like the sound of thousands of poppy seeds would make if they were put in a hollow gourd and shaken gently. He sat up quietly and strained both ears and eyes as he tried to find the source of the noise. He could still hear it, but he couldn't see anything except the gently moving shadows around the open door to the room.

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Suddenly, inexplicably, David felt a cold, sharp, twisting cramp in his stomach that spread quickly into his chest. He heard the distant voice, now panic-stricken, tell him from the back of his head to get out of the room now. Don't sit there like an idiot and reason this out. Go out the window. Stay away from the door. Something's not right here; use the window even if you have to jump. It's only one storey down. Just get out now. Get out. Get out. Get out. Get out!

David didn't move a muscle, however. He sat there in his bed, unconsciously pulling the blankets closer to his chin and bringing his knees closer to his chest. He also could feel the perspiration breaking out on his forehead, his palms, and his back. What was wrong?

He couldn't see anything except the shadows moving along the floor, and could hear nothing but that odd rattling noise.

The shadows moving along the floor weren't right. That was what was wrong. They weren't moving back and forth like shadows are supposed to do, but forward only, along the floor towards the bed. David watched the gliding forms dumbfounded while the voice in his head rose to a wild, caterwauling chant begging him to leave the room now before it was too late.

His skin began to tingle and the hair on his neck stood on end. His intestines felt like they were tying themselves into huge complicated knots, but still David refused to budge. He knew; he just knew this was nothing. It was his imagination at work again like it had been in the garden earlier. He was dreaming. It was nothing. There was nothing creepy going on out there on the floor; it was nothing but his imagination.

Those oddly moving shapes were only shadows. He was scaring himself. He was being foolish. He was being paranoid. He would wake

up soon and have another paragraph for Brian's letter: "How to Scare Yourself Silly with Tree Shadows."

Then, quite unbidden, the voice pleading vainly for David to get out of the room bluntly identified the shadows for him: garden spiders, David, hundreds, thousands of them! You killed one today and now they've tracked you down. They've read your name in the air and now they're here to kill you, David! Get out! Go!

Just as the voice finished shrieking this last proclamation, David's bowels stopped their mad twisting and turned to ice. His heart stopped beating and his mind went white with fear. The shadow had reached over the foot of his bed. And now, just appearing over the top edge of the footboard, David saw the wide, bulging eyes of the vanguard of the largest horde of spiders he had ever seen in his life. He could see with terrifying clarity the yellow markings on their thousands of bloated abdomens glowing in the pale light as they crowded onto the board and pushed each other onto the foot of the bed itself.

He also could see the moonlight glinting off their hard black legs and shining in their countless eyes. David could hear the muted, minute clattering of their hundreds of thousands of legs as they scooted along the hardwood flooring.

David looked around himself wildly. They were everywhere. They had surrounded the bed and were climbing up the sides just to sit inches deep atop the mattress. He looked behind him and saw that they were madly scrambling over each other to win a place on top of the headboard. All David had was the small island of bed he immediately occupied.

David stared at them in terror, unable to move lest he disturb them; his mind unable to think any thought except this had to be a dream. Oh, God! Let this be a dream!

As soon as this short, but genuinely heartfelt

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prayer whizzed through David's brain, he clutched his head with both hands and screamed at the sight of one giant spider nearly a foot long with a leg span of twice that length. It pulled itself up onto the edge of the footboard; thinking nothing of the smaller kin it was trampling beneath it in the process.

It sat perched on the edge of the footboard with its front pair of legs waving in the air before it. The smaller spiders milled madly about it on the board and the very foot of the mattress; scuttling around and around. But it seemed to David that none actually dared to touch the giant.

It reared up so that its back legs supported most of the spider's weight. With the foremost pair of legs, it began to trace lines in the air before it.

As David watched spellbound, he began to see a pattern form out in front of the tracings. His staring eyes could see nothing in the air in front of the spider, but his brain nonetheless could read the words it was writing. There were only three words to read. **DAVID ... GOLD ... MAN...**

David blinked and the words were gone.

"Christ almighty, they know my name," he whimpered. "They know my name!" He screamed. The story Brian had told him about writing spiders had been true. It had all been true. He was going to pay with interest now.

David began sobbing hysterically. He began apologizing to the spiders. He promised the giant spider that he would never ever, ever kill another spider again no matter what kind it was or what it was doing. One could suck a pint of blood out of him everyday and he wouldn't bat an eye. They could move into his house; they could have his house. They could have the garden and flowerbeds. They could have anything

they wanted just so long as they went away and left him alone. He begged them to go away. He pleaded with them to go away. He shrieked at the to go away.

All the while, however, the giant and its little ones merely sat quietly throughout David's babbling ranting. Finally, as David sat with his back pressed to the headboard and gasped for air, heedless of the milling throngs of spiders just inches above his head, the giant turned slowly and disappeared over the top of the footboard. At the same time, the innumerable hordes of smaller spiders surged forward, covering the bed and an insanely screeching Mr. Goldman in a matter of seconds.

David Goldman was found three days later when some friends from the office where he worked, concerned that he had missed two days without calling in, went over to his house to see what was wrong with him. They found his car in the open garage. They found his abandoned weed whacker by the tomato patch of his garden. They received no answer whatsoever to their urgent knockings at either of the doors.

Finally, by mutual unspoken agreement that something was definitely wrong, one of David's co-workers broke the glass out of the back door, reached in and turned the lock.

They went inside and cautiously looked around on the ground floor, tip-toeing and softly calling David's name as if they were afraid of disturbing him.

After finding nothing on the first floor, the little search party went upstairs. Here they encountered a pungent, sour odor like that of rotting meat. They glanced at each other nervously with intuition telling them they were about to find something they would be much better off not finding at all.

That mutual instinct proved to be correct. It was one of the women in the little group who

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found what was left of David. Her scream of shock and horror was heard several houses down on both sides of the Goldman residence. The poor woman, subsequent to her hysterical wailing jag that lasted at least half an hour, began vomiting and continued to do so for several hours running; long after her stomach had emptied itself and she could do no more than dry heave.

Everyone else in the group crowded into the room to see what caused this outburst. None were disappointed. Every last one of them turned a sickly shade of yellow-green and stumbled out of the room, some with their eyes tightly shut while others held their hands over their mouths in an attempt to staunch the bile rising in their throats.

The police were duly summoned in time. Their reaction was remarkably similar to that of the would-be rescue party. Next to be called was the coroner's office which dispatched a "meat wagon" to pick up the body after the police had finished with it at the house. The coroner, who had seen nearly all of death's faces, found himself swallowing very hard when it came time to do David's autopsy. As it turned out, though, he was unable in the end to determine the exact cause of death; at least no explanation which would satisfy the state. After all, there really wasn't all that much left for him to work with.

He had an explanation for himself, however, and it lumped itself in the coroner's brain; rolling and groaning to itself while he pondered it. It was nonsense, to be sure, but the county coroner was a man with bizarre thought patterns.

There were two things the coroner had discovered that had caused the thought, an old yarn about spiders from his childhood, to flit briefly through his mind at all although he would never

in the years left to him mention it to anyone.

The first item had been the mangled body of a common garden spider he had found during the autopsy in the shredded remains of David's windpipe. The second had been an observation made by the deputy coroner who had gone to pick up the body.

The young man had told his superior that when he had first seen the body, it had been in bed and clutched in its hand like a dagger had been a steel-nib fountain pen. The deputy surmised that the victim had obviously used the pen in an attempt to scratch a message concerning his killer into the varnish and wood of the headboard since the widely bent nib had been encrusted with varnish and wood chips and the headboard itself was badly gouged.

The deputy had looked carefully at the message which, having been written from the unfortunate victim's point of view, was upside down and backwards. The only thing the deputy coroner could make of the coarse scrawl was the single word, **SPIDER**. It had struck the deputy as being a rather strange message; there wasn't a spider to be seen anywhere in the room. Even the cobwebs had been empty.

That had clinched it for the good doctor. He had always been told by his sainted mother as a boy not to bother spiders; they kept to themselves and harmed no one after all. The coroner glanced at the ragged lumps which had once been David Goldman and sadly shook his head. Well, they *almost never harmed anyone*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rin Pitcher was the pen name of Linda K. Nearhouse in the early late 1980s and early 1990s when she was a classmate of the N3F Publications Editor, David Speakman, at Ball State.

By Britney Carter

It was odd to be walking silent halls.

Nothing had been quiet about Enterprise since Jim had first stepped aboard her gleaming floors, from the chaos of the crew to her own loud and powerful hums of life.

She was not meant to be a silent entity slipping peacefully through Space, as though she held no significance in the universe.

She was a flying piece of breathtaking pride and a source of awesome, stunning power – there was nothing insignificant about her.

But her silence was eerie, and though there were a handful of other crew members wandering about their shifts this late (who all saluted as he passed, though he had asked them repeatedly not to), a shiver wrenched up his spine at the pure emptiness of it all.

It reminded him too much of what had happened just the day before, of how deadly Space really was, how deadly it had been.

Without the noise, if he closed his eyes long enough, if he remembered where he was, he could picture the graveyard of ships he had seen, see Vulcan swallowing itself to nonexistence. See bodies of his

friends and classmates floating in the Black without hope of proper burial and familial peace.

With a quiet growl, he shook his head to rid himself of the horrific images his own mind was conjuring up, pressing a hand against cool metal to steady himself. He was supposed to be resting when not on duty – Bones would be pissed if he knew where he was.

But where his nightmarish images came so easily, almost unbidden, sleep was evasive with a brunt of cruelty. It wanted to cradle him no more than any other person on this ship. He was not oblivious enough to not notice the dark circles under the eyes of the Bridge crew Alpha shift, his Engineering crew, Bones and his doctors and nurses. He wasn't going to complain about his exhaustion and nightmares when every single one of them was just as bad off as him.

Even Spock.

The Vulcan had disappeared the moment shift had ended, and though Jim did not know Spock as well as he would like (as well as he was apparently supposed to), he knew that such haste was unchar-

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acteristic for the Science Officer. What made the departure even stranger was that Uhura, though she watched mournfully, did not follow him. And when he dropped by the quarters of the Vulcan survivors to see how they were doing and if they needed anything, he could not help but notice that Spock was not among them, either. It was strange, as unnatural as the silence of his wounded Enterprise, and it was driving him slightly crazy.

"Pointy-eared bastard," he muttered under his breath, pushing away from the wall and continuing on. "Emotionless, uncaring, green-blooded hobgoblin from Vulcan-." "Are you talking about Commander Spock, sir?"

The quiet voice startled Jim, his head jolting up to see the surprised, uncertain face of an Ensign he did not know the name of. Older than himself, but smaller, less confident. And definitely staring at him, waiting for an answer. Oh.

"Umm ... yes, but not in any disrespectful way. I was ... uh, just going to his quarters.

Ship stuff to talk about, very important, you know. Should be going there, yeah."

The Ensign's head tilted. "But Commander Spock is in the Recreational Room on E Deck, Captain," he stated, looking

even more nervous than before. Jim blinked.

"What?"

A shuffle of feet. "Yes, Captain. He has been there since the end of Alpha shift, sir. We were ordered to not enter."

What are you doing, Spock? The Rec Room?

"Um ... thank you, Ensign. I'll go there, then. Continue on with your work." The man could not have looked more relieved. "Yes, Captain." A salute (damn it), and he was alone once again.

Only with a destination this time. There was one good thing about the design of Starfleet starships, and that was that the layout was basically the same for all them. Sizes of rooms and quarters varied depending on how big the ship was, of course, but it was always the same. So he knew to turn left, enter and leave the turbo lift, and then turn right, and then right again, to get to the Rec Room of E Deck.

And with every step he took closer to the main area of the quarters of his crew, the more the silence that made him ache began to fade. The lighter his steps, the more focused his mind, the more warmth crept in away from the Black as he neared his temporary Officer.

But the sight of the cracked-open door

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made him stop short.

What am I doing? He thought, standing there, caught between a tinge of warmth and the silent chill from before. I shouldn't do this – I can't bother him. After what I said to him, after what I did. Kirk, you idiot. You don't have a right, you can't use your rank, you should go.

But his feet pushed him forward, and before he knew it his face was pressed against the crack and his eyes were taking in the sight of the room and the Vulcan he sought.

Spock was standing in the room, bathed in the light of the stars and a Holo-Projection of the Standard Starchart, with no other light than that. Jim noticed instantly that it hadn't been updated – that Vulcan still floated peacefully between Ceres and X-0924, its golden sphere illuminating and brilliant and alive. He swallowed roughly at a lump in his throat as he watched the Vulcan's pale fingers just barely graze the image, his eyes slowly traveling up the wrist and arm to the impassive face he knew well enough.

And the lump returned instantly, Spock's emotionless mask had crumbled in the privacy of the room and in the light of his planet, his cold, intelligent dark eyes gleaming with what Jim knew were tears.

There were glimmering spots on his de-

fined face that spoke of crying that had already passed, and a trembling in his shoulders that promised more to come.

"Mother," he choked softly, his fingers pulling away from the image to clench into a fist, bowing his head as tears began to fall once more.

Jim jerked back at the word as though he had been burned, stumbling in his effort to get away, eyes wide and shoulders suddenly very, very heavy. His steps to get back were quicker than his steps to get there, and he didn't stop even for salutes or questions, didn't stop when his shoulder slammed into the wall in his haste and demanded soothing.

Didn't stop until he found himself back on the couch of Bones' office (mercifully empty), falling onto the cushions without feeling the impact.

What did I do?

Hours later, when his eyes finally closed, his nightmares were not of bodies and planets, but of burning eyes and fingers wrapped his neck and suffocation and knowing that he deserved it all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Britney Carter is college student and beginning writer currently based in Decatur, Indiana. One of N3F's newest members, she is active as a contributor and editor at FanFiction.net .

R.I.P. Ray Bradbury: A very sad loss to science fiction/fantasy

by Steven Rose, Jr.

It's been a sad summer for many of us sci fi/fantasy fans since one of the greatest writers ever in the two genres passed away this past Tuesday--Ray Bradbury.

Ray Bradbury was one of the first science fiction writers who I seriously read. The very first novel by him that I purchased and read was *The Martian Chronicles* when I was a senior in high school. From then on I was hooked. I've read and collected nearly all his books of fiction and although I haven't read as much of his nonfiction books, the few that I did are totally awesome! Other fiction of his that I've read have been, *Fahrenheit 451*, the second book that I read, and *The Toynebee Convector* which I bought the summer immediately after my high school graduation and just before I entered my freshman year of college. Later I collected and read *The October Country*, a collection of his dark fiction, his dark fantasy novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *The Illustrated Man*, *I Sing the Body Electric*, and many more that I still have stacked and/or bur-

ied away somewhere in my bedroom. I doubt I'll ever get rid of any of them unless I can find older editions of some of them since I am a collector of vintage paperbacks and jacketed hard cover books because of their great art and the very eras it depicts. That is another thing Mr. Bradbury was in love with--the sci fi art of early pulp novels and magazines.

However, Mr. Bradbury was not merely a science fiction/fantasy writer. To label him as such would under rate him way too much. Ray Bradbury was a great writer period. He could and did write in almost any genre of fiction though speculative fiction was his biggest. He also wrote mystery, romance, and *romantic* (as in *highly metaphorical and sentimental, not necessarily as in love*) stories and has done equally well in them. His great poetic prose has transcended genre so much that his work is even required reading in the high schools.

I remember reading in my high school senior advanced English class one of his

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short stories adapted into the *Martian Chronicles*. It was about a horror expert who flees to Mars to make his own automated haunted house in a future where Earth has outlawed all things fantasy. Unfortunately, as much as many English teachers assigned their students to read his most famous novel, *Fahrenheit 451*--about a future society that illegalises books--none of my high school English courses selected that one for us to read. So I went out and purchased a copy and read it on my own. In reading it I discovered more than ever how dangerous censorship can be to both society and individuals.

I had the pleasure of meeting Ray Bradbury at CSU, Fresno in the '90s when he gave a presentation on his literary and artistic career. I was enchanted when I actually shook his pen-calloused hand just before he signed my copy of his *Martian Chronicles* at the book signing table. I had the pleasure of seeing him speak a second time during the 64th World Science Fiction Convention in Los

Angeles during the summer of 2006, although that time I didn't get a chance to have him sign another copy of one of his books. But I am so grateful that I spoke to him in person and had a book signed by him that first time.

One of the things I feared most in all my life is the day Ray Bradbury would die as all of us do sooner or later. I knew when that would happen there would be no more new stories from him. Sadly, that day has come. But he'll always be with us when we read his work and talk about him as I am doing this very moment. Also, I believe his spirit will echo through us new generation of speculative fiction writers who were influenced by his work and his beliefs on art and creativity. I was definitely influenced.

Mr. Bradbury, we will miss you but will always remember you and continue reading your ingenious work. May you rest in peace.

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MEANWHILE IN ATLANTA....

THE GOD OF THUNDER JOINS 60,000 FANS



...AND QUITE A FEW
MERCHANTS GATHERED.. will be
admitted...

PERHAPS THESE
ARE THE DROIDS
YOU'VE BEEN
LOOKING FOR...



...WHERE COSPLAY
SPACEBALLS
SALUTED! ...



...AS PREDATOR GREETED PAPARAZZI



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